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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 266th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 10 October 2002, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Fall ..... (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

2. **The Chairman** said that, since the previous meeting, there had been a serious deterioration of the situation around the headquarters of the President of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah, including its reoccupation and further destruction by the Israeli army. In response, the Security Council, meeting on 23 and 24 September 2002, had held a debate, in which he had participated in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee, and adopted resolution 1435 (2002).

3. As part of the Committee's 2002 training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority, two officials from the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation had been with the Division for Palestinian Rights since the beginning of the current session of the General Assembly, learning more about the work of the United Nations. He hoped that the programme, currently in its seventh year, would continue to provide such opportunities for Palestinian professionals in the future.

Developments in the Middle East peace process and the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem

4. **Mr. Al-Kidwa** (Observer for Palestine) said that the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued to deteriorate as a direct result of the aggressive policies pursued by the Government of Israel, which included State terrorism and the deliberate denial of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. In the past few days, the Israeli armed forces had perpetrated yet another war crime in the town of Khan Yunis, in an attack that had left 15 Palestinian civilians dead and over 100 wounded. No attempt had been made to justify the attack on military grounds. In recent weeks, the threat to the personal safety of Chairman Arafat had gathered momentum, with the destruction and military occupation of all areas surrounding the headquarters of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah.

5. He welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1435, demanding an immediate end to the destruction of Palestinian infrastructure in the areas surrounding Ramallah, and calling on both sides in the dispute to take effective measures to end the use of violence and terrorism. Regrettably, Israel had refused to implement the resolution. Under considerable international pressure, it had complied with at least some of the provisions by withdrawing its forces from Ramallah on 30 September. He urged the Committee to continue to press for complete compliance. Nevertheless, given the refusal of Israel to cooperate in attempts to reach a final settlement, the only viable course of action was to develop a comprehensive plan for a peaceful solution, backed by a credible international presence.

6. Regarding other events in the Middle East region, he expressed serious concern over developments in Iraq, where war seemed imminent. He urged all those concerned to ensure full compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, for instance by allowing the return of United Nations weapons inspectors, and to recall the need to prevent further suffering among the Iraqi population.

7. During the current session of the General Assembly, his delegation intended to propose amendments to the wording of certain resolutions, in order to reflect the latest developments in the region. It would also propose a new resolution on the Palestinian child, in the light of the relevant discussion at the Assembly's Special Session on Children.

8. **Mr. Hasmy** (Malaysia) said that the approach taken by the Government of Israel in response to resolution 1435 was all too familiar. By choosing to apply only some of the provisions, it hoped to fend off the concerns of the international community. That was simply not enough. Consequently, the Committee should step up calls for complete compliance, with particular emphasis on an end to the harassment of Chairman Arafat.

9. He expressed concern that the President of the United States had signed a recent bill recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The measure was inconsistent with numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, and showed tremendous insensitivity towards Palestinians and all Muslims on the question of Jerusalem. Lastly, he urged all countries to make every effort to avoid inflicting further suffering on the Iraqi people. The current crisis should be resolved in the Security Council and not by the use of force. The debate over Iraq should not be allowed to

divert attention from the more important question of the situation in Palestine.

10. **The Chairman** said that the Committee would support the draft resolution concerning Palestinian children. The decision by the United States concerning Jerusalem should be examined very closely, as the Committee should remain vigilant in that regard.

11. **Mr. Hajihusseini** (Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference) said that his Organization would issue a statement expressing its grave concern at the United States recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. That was an extremely important issue which merited the attention of the Committee.

12. **Mr. Al-Kidwa** (Observer for Palestine) joined in the condemnation of the United States action, which was a clear violation of a number of United Nations resolutions. Negative repercussions of such a contravention of international law were inevitable. There was clearly a need for change but he hoped that in the process, recent developments in the region, including the United States action, would be taken into account in such a way as to maintain the positive position most States Members of the United Nations had taken.

13. **The Chairman** agreed that the matter deserved closer attention and that any future United Nations resolution on the subject should clearly reflect the concern of the Committee.

Report by the Chairman on the United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People, 23 and 24 September 2002, Headquarters, New York

14. **The Chairman** said that the Conference had coincided with a further escalation of the crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1435 (2002) on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, had seemed to indicate that the Council had the political will to play its role, as assigned by the international community, and to assume its responsibilities. The final document of the Conference reiterated civil society's belief that the United Nations, the Geneva Conventions and other sources of international law provided the best framework for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region.

15. Under the theme, "End the Occupation", the meeting had focused on the cause of the conflict and provided the common denominator for a diverse group of civil society organizations, grass-roots activists and representatives of think tanks. All had agreed that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land since 1967 must end.

16. In particular, he wished to commend the work of the Steering Committee of the Conference, most of whose members represented umbrella organizations in their respective countries and regions. The NGO Declaration issued by the Conference called on the international community to meet its responsibility and committed civil society to a range of initiatives to strengthen the forces for peace. The second document issued by the Conference, the Plan of Action, specified those initiatives and introduced a number of activities in support of the Palestinian people. The Steering Committee would follow up on the proposed initiatives as an interim coordinator until a more permanent body for the guidance of an international movement to end the occupation had been established. Furthermore, the Steering Committee had requested his Committee to extend its cooperation in order to facilitate the implementation of commitments made by the Conference.

17. In accordance with established practice, the report of the International Conference would be issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

18. **Mr. Hasmy** (Malaysia) said it was important for the Committee to continue to work with non-governmental organizations, and wondered what form of support the Committee could render to proposals made in both the NGO Declaration and the Plan of Action. The proposals put forward by the Conference should be analysed in order to determine the most fitting response.

19. **The Chairman** agreed that the pressing issues raised by non-governmental organizations were useful in prodding the rest of the international community into discussion and action. In terms of determining a response to the specific proposals and requests made at the Conference, he believed that, at the appropriate time, those crucial concerns must be incorporated into future resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly.

Consideration of the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly (A/AC.183/2002/CRP.2)

20. **Mr. Balzan** (Rapporteur) introduced the draft report of the Committee, which provided an update on developments on the ground and on efforts to resume a political process.

21. The draft report outlined the Committee's objectives and general perspective on recent events, summarized the various General Assembly mandates given to the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Department of Public Information (DPI), and reviewed the situation on the ground and action taken by the Committee to promote Palestinian rights in the United Nations. Details were provided on the implementation of the programme of work of the Committee and the Division, the continued dialogue with the European Union, the cooperation with civil society, and the work of DPI in the past year.

22. The conclusions and recommendations expressed the Committee's concern over the increasingly dangerous situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and reaffirmed its position that the United Nations should maintain permanent responsibility with respect to all aspects of the question of Palestine until it was satisfactorily resolved and its wish to contribute to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement.

23. **The Chairman** apologized for the fact that the draft report was available only in English. However, once it was adopted, it would be translated into all the official languages of the Organization. In view of the constantly changing and tense situation on the ground, it might be necessary to make changes in the text.

24. He invited the Committee to consider the report chapter by chapter.

25. *Chapters I to VII were adopted.*

26. *The draft report, as a whole, was adopted.*

Other matters

27. **The Chairman** announced that the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People would be commemorated on 29 November 2002.

28. **Mr. Andrianarivelo-Razafy** (Madagascar) expressed the hope that the situation in Palestine would improve. His delegation would support any initiative that would lead to just and lasting peace in the region.

29. **Mr. Maso** (South Africa) said that the Committee should ascertain the views of the Diplomatic Quartet on the recent announcement by the United States of America on Jerusalem before bringing the matter before the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.